

Lessons Learned Record of Interview

Project Title:				
LL-01				
Interview Code:				
LL-01 (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)				
Interviewees:				
a, b, c				
Date/Time:				
10/01/2014; 1:00pm-2:45pm				
Purpose:				
SIGAR Attendees:				
Candace Rondeaux				
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Prepared By: (Name, title and date)				
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Key Topics:				

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Outcomes are the outcomes of a process, not the intention of the practitioner. Instead of focusing on the intent, what were the assumptions of the practitioner? And what did the practitioner learn about their assumption? Was that practitioner's recommendation 90% assumption, 10% fact, or vice versa?

(a): A lessons learned will add value as a blueprint for 'a way forward' for future practitioners. Look at Iraq. All the Iraq experts left government, and now expertise for Iraq, ISIS and Syria is not readily available. "The Capitol has lit the Bat Signal, asking Iraq hands to come back!"

(b): "When I was at West Point, our history course was taught by a British officer with Malay experience. No US officer wanted to be associated with Vietnam!"

(a): Afghanistan suffered from over-promising and under-delivering. There was too much money, too quickly.

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(b): We didn't understand the corrosive effect of money. We had a lack of an understanding of the environment, especially the host nation's capacity. "If we found an English-speaking Afghan, they were probably an ex-pat, and not necessarily an indigenous Afghan."

(a): We needed to better understand the human terrain.

(b): "We were playing on a 2-dimensional chessboard stacked on 6 layers. When I found a relationship connecting those layers, Afghan governance finally made sense to me...What we really need is a system in place to indicate when we should stop a project, or double down on a successful effort. What those inflection points are, I don't know. There is also this problem with avoiding asking for outside help. Project managers find it difficult to 'give up' on a failing project, thinking more effort is needed. This leads to the second problem of not finding outside help on time. SIAGR would be a more helpful organization if they had a resource practitioners could use in real time, to inform real-time decision-making...We did way too many projects We need to focus on 3-5 key project, with a focus on building ministerial capacity."

(a): (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) I gave deputies the goal of figuring out how to help the Afghans to build capacity. We also found out that USAID did not have yearly reports/summaries of all of their programming. I was asking what the number one employer of Iraqis was. It was the agriculture sector, yet instead of focusing on that, the US was focusing on the oil sector. In 2010, our PRTS has some focus, but the Embassy still wasn't behind the effort to focus in on developing the agriculture sector. My processor wasn't interested in building up the agriculture sector, either.

Our efforts should not have been about spending huge amounts of money. "It's more about microeconomic work. Not major infrastructure project expenditures."

(b): We also need to focus on demonstrating success, no matter how small. This is very helpful to getting both the confidence of the Afghans, plus members of Congress. That is how we sustain our efforts. "Politicians have 1 election cycle to demonstrate to their constituents that they are fixing a problem. Our focus should be on professional staff members on the Hill, to show them small, early success that can be sustained over the long term. When I was at the Joint Chiefs, a member of Congress was mad about our counternarcotics efforts. With little to show as success, Karzai also turned against our CN efforts. It's very difficult to turn back skepticism on the Hill."

(b)(5)

(a): "The NSC process is built for peacetime management." (b): "The NSC is a Cold War relic."

(a): When is a contingency a full-blown war? NSC staffers were often 30-something FSOs with limited experience. "How were they to wrangle the animals that escaped from the barn?" Each agency's culture is different.

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The NSS serves the President's management style and need. In 2008, Bush was desperate, and we saw a large number of military guys on the Council. He made strategic decisions with few details. In 2009, Obama wanted as many details as possible before making a decision. He may be less exacting now that he is in his second term.

(b)(5)



(b): There were ridiculous Congressional and DOD reporting requirements. There was a large volume of information to process.

(a): I ordered my staff to archive information from 2011, onwards.

(b): We were building sand charts of the ANSF, and then we were given different reporting requirements. DC didn't understand how the changing requirements affected the staff's time.

(a): We didn't have any quantitative metrics for development.

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(b): We didn't have metrics that could involve future decisions. We did determine what our inflection point was.

(a): What are the development world's best practices? Who is capturing lessons learned? My Iraq experience was all ad hoc. In 2004-2007, what system was in place to assist with planning?

(b): Between 2004 and 2009, there were 6 strategy/policy reviews at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Zalimay Khalilzad had a review in 2002; Meghan O'Sullivan had a review in 2004; in 2008 Stephen Hadley did a deep-dive review; The Chairmen and CENTCOM both did a review in 2008; Bruce Riedel did a review in 2009; and Gen. McChrystal did a review in 2009, which was leaked to the press.

These were all dynamic process, but the early reviews were not vigorous enough to cause any policy change. Afghanistan was always considered the good war"

In 2003, "General Abizaid kept saying 'hand it off to NATO, now now'. We got to focus on Iraq. We sold it to NATO as a peacekeeping mission. Soon, the Germans and Italians were mad at the RC's (Regional Commanders) request to hit the Taliban. They kept on saying that wasn't what they signed up for."

(b)(5)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[(c) enters]

(c): At first, Eikenberry did not want to talk to the Pakistanis. The belief that the Pakistan's national interest aligned with the US' because Musharraf joins the US' effort after 9/11 is a false belief. The US has more will and capacity to do the work. Pakistan had neither, and even if they worked in the same direction as the US, it would have appeared as though their commitment was diverging from our own.

(b): "We are a 21st century nation with a Robert McNamara model of management. While in Afghanistan, the Afghans have a management that relies on relationships, and not results."

(c): With Zal (Khalilzad), he has both Bush and Cheney's ear. Under his guidance, interagency feuds disappeared rather quickly. But when he was moved to Iraq, and the Afghans met a new military commander and ambassador, they were upset that they had not developed a deeper relationship with the departed leadership.

Initially, PRTs commanders reported to the RC-Commander. The PRT commanders also reported to an annual board in Kabul. There was a unity of effort. When, with the introduction of ISAF, each PRT reported to their home nation's command, there was no unity of effort. The PRTs stopped reporting to the RC.

(b): We had 26 PRTs in 34 provinces, but even those lacked the resources to fully staff them. This was an example of how US plans imposed on Karzai, and this ability to implement any of them.

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In Iraq, we were switching PRT leads from State to Defense. In Afghanistan, it was the complete opposite! Yet, after 10 years of fighting, in a variety of conditions, the PRT model was essentially the same, and not adapted to the particular circumstances of its respective province.

In addition, PRTs built local capacity. But this hurt Karzai's nation-building efforts by creating parallel governance structures.

(c): Now, commanders bring in new PRT policies. There is no continuity of efforts, which further confused Karzai.

In addition, further reviews were done by Odierno, Petraeus, Mullen and McMasters.

(b): The day before Thanksgiving, 2009, Bush said his latest Afghanistan review was not to go public, but simply given to the Obama transition team. Bush did not want to be seen as boxing in his successor. He left Obama's team with 10 near- and medium-term recommendations.

(b)(5)

There was also a Nixon-era law which prevented us from keeping our paperwork or sending it to Obama transition team. I had to email these docs to DOD/myself so they could be later used to brief the Obama team. Items had to be approved by the White House counsel's office, too.

(b)(5)

(a): We got lots of resistance from Executive Branch agencies to develop measures of effectiveness, not just measures of progress.

(b): "We knew it was serious when OMB showed up." They always showed up to other agencies in order to justify expenditures.

(a): Compared to Afghanistan, Iraq was easy. It was a US-led project, they had modern infrastructure, they had plenty of natural resources, they had an educated elite; of these elements were very different in Kabul.

(b): Decision-making was much more streamlined in Iraq than Afghanistan. And we threw even more money there than we did in Afghanistan.

(c): Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani said the Afghan capacity to absorb money was \$2 billion a year, max. Everything else was wasted money.

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We had a private brain trust to tell us how much money could be absorbed by Afghan firms, or Gulf firms.

(b): "We learned that it was probably better to under spend than overspend. But there is no specific formula for success. Principles for success are a very good jumping-off point." Plus, we need to avoid having DOD slip back into the mindset that "the Pentagon only kills things". They need to continue working to develop their interagency approach and capacity.

(a): All of my military staff had to be re-organized to do reconstruction tasks. I never had enough State and USAID staff/expertise.

(b): A good Lessons Learned goal should be about avoiding failures, as there is no formula for success. The SIGIR Lessons Learned focused too much on what went wrong, when it is more helpful to share what went well and to promulgate those lessons.

(b): Sell success stories. Remove names to remove specific blame. A SWAT analysis would be very helpful.

(a): Define the limiting factors of a "nation-building effort". "Limited war vs. total war? What is the time commitment for each? They will factor into what lessons learn should discuss".

Points of contact mentioned for us to follow up on:

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

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